

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2348

As Reported by House Committee On: Ways & Means

Title: An act relating to surcharges on fee-based activities related to public health.

Brief Description: Regarding surcharges on fee-based activities related to public health.

Sponsors: Representatives Moeller and Ormsby.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Ways & Means: 4/14/09, 4/20/09 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Assesses an \$8 surcharge on certified copies of birth and death certificates for the 2009-11 fiscal biennium.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 14 members: Representatives Linville, Chair; Ericks, Vice Chair; Cody, Conway, Darneille, Haigh, Hunt, Hunter, Kagi, Kenney, Kessler, Pettigrew, Seaquist and Sullivan.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Alexander, Ranking Minority Member; Bailey, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Dammeier, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Priest, Ross and Schmick.

Staff: Chris Blake (786-7392)

Background:

Vital records include records of birth, death, fetal death, marriage, dissolution, annulment, and legal separation. Certified copies of vital records may be obtained through either the Department of Health or a local registrar. There is a \$20 fee, established in statute, for certified copies of vital records. Of the \$20 cost, \$8 of the fee is deposited in the Death Investigations Account. Birth and death certificates used for compensation or pension claims

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involving the Veterans Administration, or for law enforcement to maintain sex offender databases are exempt from the payment of any fees.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

An \$8 surcharge is assessed upon the purchase of certified copies of birth and death certificates from either the Department of Health or a local registrar. The surcharge does not apply to birth or death certificates used for compensation or pension claims involving the Veterans Administration or for law enforcement to maintain sex offender databases. The surcharge expires on June 30, 2011.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill removes surcharges on health professions credentialing fees and restaurant inspection fees. Birth and death certificates are exempt from the surcharge when used for compensation or pension claims involving the Veterans Administration, or for law enforcement for maintaining sex offender databases. The surcharge expires on June 30, 2011.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Everybody needs to pitch in to fill in the gap for the short-term, while stable and appropriate long-term dedicated sources are identified.

(With concerns) A \$7 surcharge may not seem like a lot to many professions; however, there are a lot of health care providers who earn very little money and this would be a burden on them and a barrier to entering the health care field. This is a potential solution to the problem of funding public health; however, some administrative aspects need to be fixed. Fees have recently increased substantially for many professions and this just adds to those extra costs. While public health is the backbone of the health care system, it would be better to have a dedicated source of funding for public health. Fees should be used for the professions that pay them. There needs to be a nexus between public health and the licensing fees.

(Opposed) The basic principle of using licensing fees for purposes not related to the profession is not acceptable. Everybody benefits from public health, so it should not be just a small segment of the public that pays for it. Last year fees were increased substantially for many health care providers and this would add to those extra costs. The fee should expire in

two years. The restaurant industry is under great pressure in this economy. Restaurants already pay local agencies for regulation and oversight and it doesn't make sense to levy a state fee that will simply be returned to the local governments.

Persons Testifying: (In Support) Sofia Aragon, Washington Nurses Association.

(With concerns) Julie Ferguson, Washington Private Duty Association and the Washington Home Care Association; Melanie Stewart, Washington Licensed Mental Health Counselors and AMTA-Washington Chapter; Melissa Johnson, Physical Therapy Association and Association of Alcoholism and Addictions Programs; Susie Tracy, Washington State Medical Association and American Medical Response; Linda Hull, Washington State Dental Association; and Scott Merriman, Association of Washington Cities.

(Opposed) Denny Eliason, Washington Restaurant Association; Brad Tower, Ophthalmic Physicians of Washington; and Lori Belinski, Washington State Chiropractic Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.